

"To encourage the observation and study  
of the birds of the Toowoomba area."

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NEWS-SHEET No. 14 - DECEMBER, 1976/JANUARY, 1977.

At the time of writing our club could be said to have almost global representation. Two members are currently in California, two in England and one is visiting Lord Howe and Norfolk Islands. Another member is in Sri Lanka and two more are in Southern Australia. When they all return we can expect some interesting observations and information.

Two other members are at present engaged in the task of hand rearing birds. Their experiences and notes on feeding formulae will appear in our news-sheet as will, we hope, news of their success.

For a variety of reasons the final quarterly summary of area birds for 1976 has not been published. This will now appear as part of the annual area report which should be available soon after the January recess. This recess, common to most clubs and societies, is brought about by the dispersal of members on holidays.

At the Treasurer's request we remind you that annual subscriptions are now due. Payment can be made to the Treasurer at the address given above. Several members have made donations along with their subscription and for this we say "thank you".

Ron Hopkinson,  
Editor.

MEMBERS' BIRD NOTES.

Black Cormorant. 25.12.76. Withcott. WJ. EJ.  
Cattle Egret. 27.11.76. Rathdowney. JC.  
Little Egret. 27.11.76. Rathdowney. JC.  
Nankeen Night Heron. 27.12.76. Redwood Park. RGH.  
Royal Spoonbill. 27.11.76. Rathdowney. JC.  
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Wedge-tailed Eagle. 27.11.76. Rathdowney. JC.  
Swamphen. 1.12.76. Prospect St. GC.  
King Parrot. 25.12.76. Rowbotham St. RGH.  
Crimson Rosella. 25.12.76. Rowbotham St. RGH.  
Pallid Cuckoo. 21.12.76. Withcott. RGH.  
Fan-tailed Cuckoo. 19.12.76. Withcott. RE.  
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Pheasant Coucal. 19.12.76. Withcott. RE.  
White-throated Nightjar. 31.12.76. Mt. Lofty. RW.  
White-throated Nightjar. 1.1.77. Flagstone Creek. RGH. KH.  
Red-backed Kingfisher. 23.12.76. Murphy's Creek. RGH. KH.  
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Richard's Pipit. 27.11.76. Rathdowney. JC.  
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KH: Kerrie Hobson. WJ: Bill Jolly. EJ: Eileen Jolly. RW: Bob Weis.

NEW TOOWOOMBA BIRDS.

Yellow-eyed Cuckoo-shrike (*Coracina lineata*). 19.12.76. Redwood Park.  
This bird was well seen and confirmed by members on the December outing.

### A MUST FOR YOUR BOOKSHELF.

Anyone who has examined the excellent new publication "Readers Digest Complete Book of Australian Birds" will agree that it should be on the bookshelf of all bird lovers. We are pleased to announce that it is available to club members at the price of \$21.43 including postage. This represents a considerable saving on the normal retail price of \$33.00. To order your copy contact the President at the address on page one.

### IN SEARCH OF GRASS OWLS.

Along with Rod Hobson and Bill Jolly I was recently invited by John Walter to join him on an expedition to a property north of Goondiwindi where a "usually reliable source" had indicated a party of some 6 or 7 Grass Owls (*Tyto longimembris*) had been in residence during the previous week.

The owls had been reported as having been flushed regularly by machinery operating on the property, but choosing never to fly many yards before seeking cover again in the standing crop. Our ambition, therefore, was to gain access to the paddock before the crop was harvested and we set out on Sunday, 5th December, 1976.

A speedy journey ensued with considerable anticipation being generated along the way, some of which was dispelled by the sight of a 640 acre paddock of stubble which surely could not have provided sufficient cover for a Richards Pipit let alone 6 or 7 Grass Owls.

But Goondiwindi is a long way from home, and the party was not prepared to give up without a fight. Plans were made to cover the paddock grid-style with three vehicles and the pursuit was on. Each and every tussock of grass or uncut crop which might possibly conceal an owl was investigated and several logs and stumps were identified (and one muffler slightly bent). The birds had flown. Yet the day was by no means finished and we were happy to discover a number of interesting species on the property and on the way home. Amongst these were the following:-

Black Kite (large group), Ground Cuckoo-shrike, White-winged Wren, Yellow-throated Miner, Plum-headed Finch, White-winged Chough.

Ron Hopkinson.

### A REPLY TO QUERY ON A HERON.

I was interested in Rod Hobson's "Query on a Heron" and find, according to Readers Digest Complete Book of Australian Birds, that both phases of the Mangrove Heron (*Butorides striatus*) develop a red face and legs during courtship. May be someone else has noted this too?

This same book assisted me recently when we saw a number of terns on Macquarie Downs. We felt that they were Whiskered Terns (*Chlidonias hybrida*). Everything was correct except the bill and legs which were black. The usual field guides claim they are red, and so they are when breeding. However, the Readers Digest book states that in non-breeding and immatures the bill and legs are black, so we were relieved not to have a mystery bird on our hands.

Ruth Walter.

### A LETTER FROM AMEY.

First may we wish all members and friends of the Toowoomba Bird Club, of which we are proud to be members, a very happy and good birding new year.

Since reading "Query on a Heron", Rod Hobson, T.B.C. No. 13, November, 1976 and also having the chance to discuss this with Rod at the T.B.C. barbecue and field trip December, 1976, I became very interested indeed, and could not rest until I had tried to solve the riddle. The outcome of which, I believe would interest members.

Right from the start the general description resembles the Black-crowned Night Heron (*Nycticorax nycticorax*), but the red legs were off putting, so let us delve deeper.

Hérons, Night Herons and several Egrets change colour in the breeding season, not by plumage but their soft parts, such as legs, bill, eye and naked parts of the head. The iris and legs of the Green Heron (*Butorides virescens*), change from yellow to orange. The base of the bill of the Squacco Heron (*Ardeola ralloides*), from yellow green to blue. The bill and legs of the Grey Heron (*Ardea cinerea*),

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Heron, Night Herons and several Egrets change colour in the breeding season, not by plumage but their soft parts, such as legs, bill, eye and naked parts of the head. The iris and legs of the Green Heron (*Butorides virescens*), change from yellow to orange. The base of the bill of the Squacco Heron (*Ardeola ralloides*), from yellow green to blue. The bill and legs of the Grey Heron (*Ardea cinerea*), and some other species flush red during their moments of excitement, this is apparently caused by the same mechanism as blushing in humans. Even our White-faced Heron (*Ardea novaehollandiae*), at times in breeding plumage has reddish legs instead of yellowish green.

Now back to Rod's Heron, the only species to fill the description is the Black-crowned Night Heron (*N. nycticorax*). The plumage being black from crown to nape,

(cont/d.)

A LETTER FROM AMBY (cont/d.)

very dark grey to black back, wings slightly paler than back, the wings also have the white shoulder patch resembling that of the White-necked Heron (*Ardea pacificus*), the underparts under certain conditions would appear pale grey, and the legs as we have seen could well be red.

In Slater's Non-passerines it is mentioned that (*N. nycticorax*) could well be recorded in Australia, and we all know that birds have no political boundaries, and often turn up in very unusual places.

If this was the species Rod observed, I congratulate him and wish that I had seen it.

References used:- P. Slater - A Field Guide to Australian Birds (Non-passerines). J.D. Macdonald - Birds of Australia. Singer and Austin - Birds of the World, p.50-56. Birds of the World, Vol. 1, p.116-144. International Wildlife Encyclopedia, Vol. 8, p.1059.

Reg Eley.

SOME NOTES ON A CLOSE FLYING AUSTRALIAN GANNET.

Having for some years at different times of the year been interested in the numbers of Australian Gannets (*Morus serrator*) fishing in a particular area of the open sea off Caloundra and Tweed Heads, I was most interested to observe at Caloundra on 25th June, 1976 several Australian Gannets, from immatures to adults fishing in the "calm" water of Pumice Stone Passage between Golden Beach and the Bar and between the centre channel and the mainland shore, i.e. the north side of the Passage. More particularly the main point of interest was an immature bird observed at very close range, in fact, within 10 metres of Bulcock Beach.

Here, this bird of the open ocean fished in the deep channel along Bulcock Beach, working up along the beach, then gliding back to repeat the performance. The bird appeared to take no apparent notice whatever of a number of people fishing from the beach and continued to dive among the small outboard motor fishing boats anchored in the Passage.

The number of times the bird surfaced without a catch indicated in this instance the high proportion of dives in relation to the catch.

This is the closest I have seen these birds to a shore line, whilst fishing, apart from the fact that people were standing or sitting along the beach.

Ron Wilson.

A BIRDING TRIP TO BIRDSVILLE. (Continued from News-sheets No. 12 & 13).

Complete list of species in their specific areas.

Windora to Quilpie: Emu, Pelican, Black Cormorant, Little Black Cormorant, Little Pied Cormorant, Darter, White-necked Heron, White Egret, Black Duck, Grey Teal, Black Kite, Whistling Kite, Square-tailed Kite, Wedge-tailed Eagle, Nankeen Kestrel, Brown Hawk, Brolga, Black-fronted Dotterel, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, Peaceful Dove, Crested Pigeon, Little Corella, Galah, Ringneck Parrot, Budgerygah, Pallid Cuckoo, Fan-tailed Cuckoo, Barking Owl, Red-backed Kingfisher, Tree Martin, Fairy Martin, Australian Pipit, Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike, White-winged Triller, Rufous Songlark, Brown Flycatcher, Red-capped Robin, Willie Wagtail, Rufous Whistler, Grey Thrush, Crested Bellbird, Brown Tree-creeper, Mistletoe-bird, Black Honeyeater, Singing Honeyeater, White-plumed Honeyeater, White-rumped Miner, Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater, Zebra Finch, Olive-backed Oriole, Peewee, White-winged Chough, Apostle-bird, White-browed Woodswallow, Masked Woodswallow, Black-faced Woodswallow, Black-backed Magpie, Australian Crow/Raven.

Quilpie to Thargomindah: Emu, Little Grebe, White-necked Heron, White-faced Heron, Nankeen Night Heron, White Ibis, Black Swan, Black Duck, Grey Teal, Australian Shoveler, White-eyed Duck, Black-shouldered Kite, Black Kite, Whistling Kite, Square-tailed Kite, Collared Sparrowhawk, Wedge-tailed Eagle, Spotted Harrier, Little Falcon, Nankeen Kestrel, Brown Hawk, Little Quail, Brolga, Dusky Moorhen, Coot, Spur-winged Plover, Black-fronted Dotterel, Peaceful Dove, Diamond Dove, Crested Pigeon, Red-tailed Black Cockatoo, Sulphur-crested Cockatoo, Pink Cockatoo, Little Corella, Galah, Cockatiel, Red-winged Parrot, Ringneck Parrot, Budgerygah, Owllet Nightjar, Laughing Kookaburra, Red-backed Kingfisher, White-backed Swallow, Tree Martin, Fairy Martin, Australian Pipit, Ground Cuckoo-shrike, Black-faced

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Reg & Chris Eley.

#### REDWOOD PARK OUTING - 19.12.76.

If you have the feeling that outings to Redwood Park seem somehow to coincide with unduly hot days, then the experience of Sunday, 19th. December will no doubt have reinforced that impression.

A good-sized party of members descended into the park soon after 8.30 a.m. under the scrutiny of several of the Scarlet Honeyeaters which are often to be found around the park entrance, only to find that the track to the creek, usually abounding with Thornbills, Speckled Warblers and the like, was attended by little more than a lone Mistletoe-bird and one much less common visitor, a Cicada Bird, singing loudly for us from an exposed perch. Our investigation of the area just inside the park fence, adjacent to the highway, was however to yield more birds than most of us could keep up with. While it was not easy for some to decide whether to examine a partly-hidden Varied Triller or a mixed party of Thornbills and Weebills, no-one was in any dilemma as to where to direct their attention when a Barred Cuckoo-shrike appeared, a new bird to our Toowoomba list and well seen by all present.

Several female Australian Regentbirds showed themselves with an occasional male flashing past during our pre-lunch rest-break at the edge of the park, at which time we also enjoyed a high-flying Wedge-tailed Eagle. A few members attacked the lantana to reach the secluded haunt of our sometimes-seen Powerful Owl (he was not at home) these hardy types were none-the-less rewarded with Emerald Doves and Spectacled Flycatchers.

Having reassembled at about 11 a.m. the group agreed that bird-wise its appetite was sated and an early lunch-break was much sought after by all whereupon it gave

Pied Butcherbird, Grey Butcherbird, Black-backed Magpie, Australian Crow/Raven.

Thargomindah to Cunnamulla: Emu, Little Grebe, Hoary-headed Grebe, Great Crested Grebe, Pelican, Black Cormorant, Little Black Cormorant, Little Pied Cormorant, Darter, White-necked Heron, White-faced Heron, White Egret, Nankeen Night Heron, White Ibis, Straw-necked Ibis, Royal Spoonbill, Black Swan, Black Duck, Grey Teal, White-eyed Duck, Wood Duck, Musk Duck, Black-shouldered Kite, Black Kite, Whistling Kite, Square-tailed Kite, Brown Goshawk, Wedge-tailed Eagle, Swamp Harrier, Black Falcon, Little Falcon, Nankeen Kestrel, Brown Hawk, Little Quail, Brolga, Dusky Moorhen, Eastern Swamphen, Coot, Spur-winged Plover, Banded Plover, Black-fronted Dotterel, Red-kneed Dotterel, White-headed Stilt, Silver Gull, Crested Pigeon, Little Corella, Galah, Cockatiel, Red-winged Parrot, Ringneck Parrot, Budgerygah, Pallid Cuckoo, Horsfield Bronze Cuckoo, Barking Owl, Owllet Nightjar, Laughing Kookaburra, Red-backed Kingfisher, White-backed Swallow, Tree Martin, Fairy Martin, Australian Pipit, Ground Cuckoo-shrike, Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike, White-winged Triller, Chestnut-breasted Quail-thrush, Halls Babbler, Australian Reed Warbler, Brown Songlark, Rufous Songlark, Blue and White Wren, Purple-backed Wren, Broad-tailed Thornbill, Whiteface, Crimson Chat, Brown Flycatcher, Red-capped Robin, Willie Wagtail, Restless Flycatcher, Rufous Whistler, Grey Thrush, Crested Bellbird, Wedgebill, Brown Tree-creeper, Mistletoe-bird, Striated Pardalote, Singing Honeyeater, White-plumed Honeyeater, White-rumped Miner, Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater, Little Friarbird, Zebra Finch, Olive-backed Oriole, Peewee, Apostle-bird, White-browed Woodswallow, Masked Woodswallow, Black-faced Woodswallow, Dusky Woodswallow, Pied Butcherbird, Grey Butcherbird, Black-backed Magpie, Australian Crow/Raven.

Cannamulla to Charleville: Emu, Straw-necked Ibis, Whistling Kite, Square-tailed Kite, Wedge-tailed Eagle, Nankeen Kestrel, Brown Hawk, Banded Plover, Common Bronzewing, Crested Pigeon, Sulphur-crested Cockatoo, Galah, Cockatiel, Red-winged Parrot, Red-backed Kingfisher, Fairy Martin, Australian Pipit, Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike, Grey-crowned Babbler, Blue and White Wren, Yellow-tailed Thornbill, Brown Flycatcher, Hooded Robin, Willie Wagtail, Restless Flycatcher, Singing Honeyeater, White-plumed Honeyeater, Noisy Miner, White-rumped Miner, Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater, Zebra Finch, Peewee, Apostle-bird, Black-faced Woodswallow, Pied Butcherbird, Grey Butcherbird, Black-backed Magpie, Australian Crow/Raven.

Reg & Chris Eley.

#### REDWOOD PARK OUTING - 19.12.76.

If you have the feeling that outings to Redwood Park seem somehow to coincide with unduly hot days, then the experience of Sunday, 19th. December will no doubt have reinforced that impression.

A good-sized party of members descended into the park soon after 8.30 a.m. under the scrutiny of several of the Scarlet Honeyeaters which are often to be found around the park entrance, only to find that the track to the creek, usually abounding with Thornbills, Speckled Warblers and the like, was attended by little more than a lone Mistletoe-bird and one much less common visitor, a Cicada Bird, singing loudly for us from an exposed perch. Our investigation of the area just inside the park fence, adjacent to the highway, was however to yield more birds than most of us could keep up with. While it was not easy for some to decide whether to examine a partly-hidden Varied Triller or a mixed party of Thornbills and Weebills, no-one was in any dilemma as to where to direct their attention when a Barred Cuckoo-shrike appeared, a new bird to our Toowoomba list and well seen by all present.

Several female Australian Regentbirds showed themselves with an occasional male flashing past during our pre-lunch rest-break at the edge of the park, at which time we also enjoyed a high-flying Wedge-tailed Eagle. A few members attacked the lantana to reach the secluded haunt of our sometimes-seen Powerful Owl (he was not at home) these hardy types were none-the-less rewarded with Emerald Doves and Spectacled Flycatchers.

Having reassembled at about 11 a.m. the group agreed that bird-wise its appetite was sated and an early lunch-break was much sought after by all, whereupon it gave Eileen and myself great pleasure to welcome our friends to the shade, cool drinks and cool swimming provided by our new home at Withcott, following an exhilarating morning in the bush, where a relaxing afternoon was spent by many, (while again the more hardy might be said to have gone further than the others!)

Bill Jolly.

(cont/d.)



Bird list for Redwood Park outing - 19.12.76.

Wedge-tailed Eagle	Grey Fantail
Nankeen Kestrel	Rufous Fantail
White-headed Pigeon	Willie Wagtail
Domestic Pigeon	Leaden Flycatcher
Emerald Dove	Golden Whistler
Rainbow Lorikeet	Rufous Whistler
Pallid Cuckoo	Grey Shrike-thrush
Channel-billed Cuckoo	Eastern Whipbird
L. Kookaburra	Mistletoe-bird
Dollar Bird	Gr.-br. Silvereye
Barred Cuckoo-shrike	Brown Honeyeater
Bl.-f. Cuckoo-shrike	Scarlet Honeyeater
Cicada Bird	Lewin Honeyeater
Varied Triller	Little Friarbird
Superb Blue Wren	Red-browed Finch
Variegated Wren	Banded Finch
Red-backed Wren	Indian Myna
Weebill	Olive-backed Oriole
Little Thornbill	Southern Figbird
Brown Thornbill	Magpie Lark
Wh.-br. Scrub-wren	Dusky Woodswallow
Speckled Warbler	Pied Currawong
Jacky Winter	Australian Regentbird
S. Yellow Robin	Australian Crow.

FIELD ACTIVITY FOR FEBRUARY.

Date: Sunday, 20th. February, 1977. Place: Gawsorth Stud and South Toowoomba  
Lion's Park.

(Quail at Gawsorth and Reed Warblers later?) Leader: Rod Hobson.

Assembly Point: Pigott's car park. Time: 8.30 a.m.

NEW MEMBERS.

The club is pleased to welcome Bob Weis, Rifle Range Road, Toowoomba.

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